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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by Shia Rights Watch Inc., a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Recognizing Social Justice as the Foundation of all Developments

Greetings esteemed colleagues and member states,

On behalf of Shia Muslims around the world it is a pleasure to be able to present this address to the commission. The Right to development is an important tool in lifting nations out of number of ongoing issues such as poverty, illiteracy, un-employment, violence, and even political and cultural discriminations.

We, at Shia Rights Watch, believe most challenging concerns of society can be facilitated by empowering all members of the society via social justice. In fact, development is only met when all people, regardless of their race, culture, socio-economic status, religion, and nationality live in socially just environments where they are given the opportunity to reach their full potential. No nation can grow and progress without involvement of its citizen. Unrest in most countries is a direct result of governments' refusal to allow their citizens to become involved in development. War in Syria, unrest in Libya and Egypt, and riots in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia are examples of how governments' reluctance to involve all members of the society in decision making for their futures has resulted in retrogression instead of development. The United Nations plays an important role in emphasizing the need of inclusive approaches from governments. Ostracizing minorities, limiting their accessibilities, suppressing their peaceful assembly, and threatening their existence has led to distrust between communities and authorities. Authentic development in such a society is almost impossible. The SRW believes that honoring the rights of people to take part in their government, acknowledging their membership, giving them freedom to practice their religion, and including minorities in the mainstream population is crucial for sustainable development goals.

Through this statement, we hope to advocate for the Shia minority who have been directly attacked by some governments and many extremist groups. Please note: This statement uses the Shia minority as an example and this model can be applied for all groups. We use this population because our NGO's specialty is focused on this group. However, as an organization we support all minority groups and human rights across the world.

According to the first ever causality analyses data base gathered by our research wing, on average 28 Shia Muslims were killed, arrested, or kidnapped on a daily basis in the year 2015. The Shia community cannot help the progress of their country due to extreme fear of the potential consequences that they may face at the hands of their government.In addition their home countries cannot progress and develop because of the existence of unsatisfied populations. Oppressing minority groups, and denying their rights negatively disturbs both small communities as well as larger society. By putting individuals at the center of development, and by including minorities in mainstream of the society, countries establish a basis for tolerance and diversity, and you ensure that change comes from the bottom up rather than from the top down.

Based on our research, Shia population reported not feeling safe in 24 countries around the world. In other words in 11% of the world's countries there are Shia Muslims who live under fear of physical and emotional violence. In addition, this threat of violence has, in no small way, been aided by officials who have done little to investigate and prosecute crimes against Shia. Bombings and shootings against Shia Muslims largely occur without retribution either on the individuals committing the acts or the organizations facilitating the acts. This slow response by governing authorities has significantly reduced trust for the institutions designed to protect them. Without this trust acting as a basis for development, the aspirations proclaimed in this committee will largely go unheeded.

Beside high number of causalities, this group faces limitations in many critical areas for development such as education. In Malaysia, for example, all Shia publications and educational materials are banned. Meanwhile, e mainstream sermons and school curriculums have been documented to contain hate speech that incites violence against Shia Muslims. Some of these materials contain language similar to that displayed by terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Shia minorities face so many discriminations that they can be covered under more than ten categories of the list of UN human rights issues such as:

Civil & political Rights, Detention, Education, Economic/ Social & culture Rights, Freedom of Religion and Belief, Minorities, Torture, Transitional Justice, Violent, and more. (http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/ListOfIssues.aspx)

Respect for free expression, judicial reform, protection of safety, greater intergroup cohesion, and a rebuilding of trust must be the foundation for social development efforts all communities. When we can move past the elements of divisive governance and put individuals at the center of development, we will be able to witness great strides to a more unified and prosperous society.